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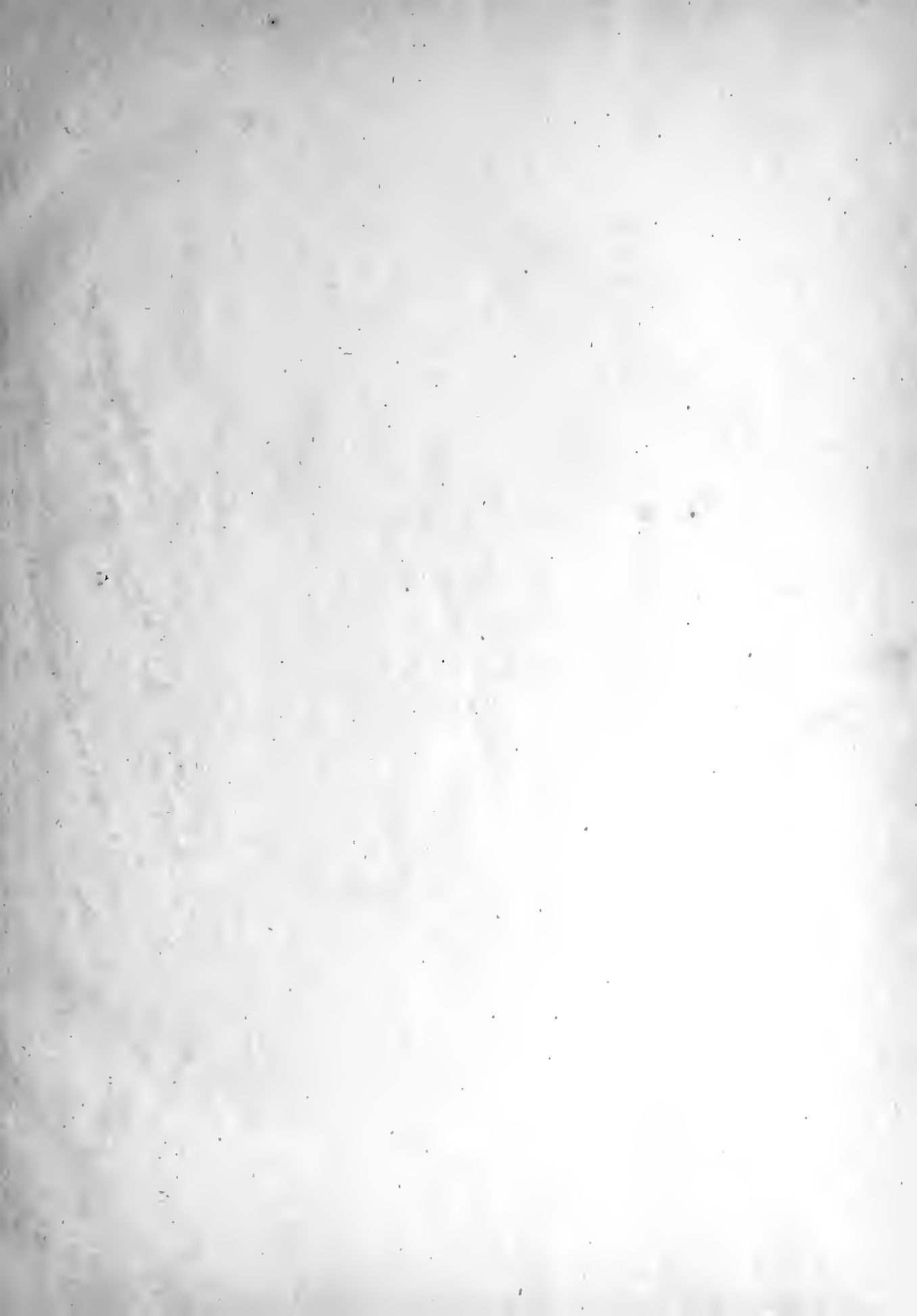
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Italy Revealed

Frank Allaben

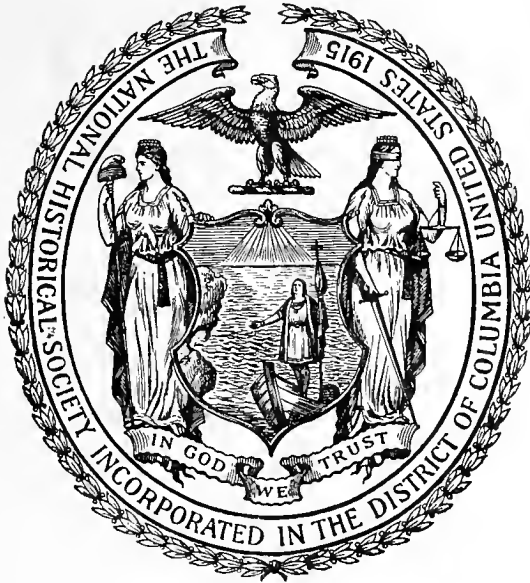
Italy Revealed

Italy Revealed

by

Frank Allaben

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American History



The National Historical Society

37 West 39th Street, New York

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Italy Revealed

I

Hail, Italy, kindled
Out of the ash of death!
Italy, bruised and crowned
In glory of thy gashes!
Through seven seals unloosed, into thy book
Of revelation let our wonder look.

War's caustic scours imaginary sight,
And we no longer dream we see
The ghost of Rome in risen Italy —
Time's restless apparition walking
The Mediterranean mid-way in a mirage
Whose glitter in the blue mirrors of the air
Seemed but an echo of thy ancient light.

Earth's suffering flesh and blood
Now battle-griefs attest thee,
Even as pangs of war
Revived thee when the Corsican swept by,
And we beheld thee stir,
Disquieted out of silence.

A blind dismembered thing, we watched thee waking
Thy ten disjointed segments; watched their squirm
Within as many tyrannies,
Writhing to knit up seams long ripped and frayed.
Then rose thy orb of empire, lit
Like a new pole-star in the purple north,
Reared on a throne above the Piedmont hills,
Sheer over Savoy's House, whose cry empowered
Cavour's and Garibaldi's, gathering up
Mazzini's dream unbroken out of night
Into substantial day.

We watched thy blowing garments
Wing over sapphire seas,
And climb the dreaming airs
Into the golden sun.
We saw thee print upon the Red Sea shore
Thy Abyssinian sandals;
Snatch from the shoulder of the smitten Turk
Tawny-colored Libya
To gird the loins of thy strength;
Out of his turban tear
Tripoli's black diamond for thy diadem;
And stride from isle to isle before
Adalia's slumbering door
To bid thy antique ward, old Asia,
Quit the grey tomb of her antiquity.

ITALY REVEALED

We heard Marconi's pathless lightnings speak ;
We saw the brawn of thy battleships give
New patterns to the sea.
Yet all thy motions staged a pantomime
That twinkled through our winking eyes
To glimmer in a thought,
A pageant filmed, a marvel screened,
Part posed and part imagined.
What curious thing, half-wraith, half-life,
Could shimmer, half-emerged,
Out of the chrysalis of a thousand years?

Who'll unroll, Italy, thy seven-sealed book?
War, blistering war,
Hell's light of revelation ;
The branding iron of reality
Hot on the quick of the soul !
War stamps thy succoring image
On the coin of our need.
Not war thy Spurred Boot swinging
Hard at the Musselman —
But unto us an unimpassioned rumor
Carrying no report
How, in the fevered frame of thy unquiet,
Prophetic intuitions stretched and strove,
Training behind a veil their life-and-death
Struggle with destiny.

Never could war to chip the stony Turk
Chisel thy statue heroic in our heart.
Maniac war reveals thee :
Satan incarnate in gorilla herds,
Mauling the face of man,
The heart of Belgium, and the soul of France,
Resisting, dauntless, like an angel torn,
One shoulder slit and limp.

Justice was smitten on the cheek ;
Faith, being ravished, fainted away ;
The hopes of nations fell ;
The dry lands swayed like seas ;
The age bowed down and trembled, her pillars knocking together ;
The peoples staggered like a drunken man.
Flung out of pillowed slumber, dreading Peace
Swooned into rigid nightmare, staring up,
Gazing where heaven weighed the quivering earth,
Hung in a balance high above our hope.

Italy, it was then our anguish threw
Out of her black suspense a frantic look
That caught thy noble gesture in the sky,
Casting thy glory's weight
In just neutrality that tipt the scale.

ITALY REVEALED

That tipt the scale, for out of thy frontier,
Slung from a sling, the hurtled sons of France
The invader smote and stretched along the Marne,
Prone as Goliath in the sling of David;
While, cruising up the round ball of the world,
Securely ferried through thy friendly seas,
Justice assembled her crusading knights.

As, locked within the firmament, the star
Of hope that jewels morning sudden shines
Out of his crystal casket, so we saw,
Shining through thy neutrality, thy heart.
The Mind that thrills the pulse of kings and nations
Bids, Italy, thy loosed first seal enthrone
Grave-visaged Justice, weighing iniquity.

II

He who thy palsied orbit raised again
Out of the sepulchre of ruined worlds,
Had timed thy perihelion to earth's need;
And now the event that loosed thy second seal
He nursed in secret through ten bitter months
That travailed in thy soul to be delivered
Of faith, precocious in thy womb —
Thy leaping infant, struggling for mastery
Over the interloper, German greed,
With covetous fingers crooked
In surreptitious clutch in the walls of life.

When the gorged dragons, clawing Russia down,
Filled earth with wailing, clang! the clock of God
Began to strike their doom — thou, Italy,
God's hammer on the gong!

Yet swift as thy knighted sword
Knelt in the bending vow,
The crouch of the couched panthers sprang,
Fraud and dishonor, flung
At the throat of thy plighted word
To strangle faith in the dust
At the feet of the hope of the world!

God knew — His purpose through thy borders walked,
Bringing thy help, hid in a poet's heart.

The whirlwind caught d'Annunzio,
And on the blast he rode
To Quarto hard by Genoa,
Thy people, like the swirling gusts of spring,
Delirious around.

From Genoa thy visionary son
Plowed the unknown till his long furrow burst
Into the hopeful soil of a new world.

ITALY REVEALED

From thence, to weave up thy unravelled lands,
A new Columbus, Garibaldi, sailed
With his immortal thousand, steering south.
And here God's finger, in a poet's spirit,
Builds thee an altar, o'er whose cry we see
The heavens open and a flame leap down,
Lighting a hurricane of sparks and brands
That blow a roaring furnace in thy soul —
Till God forge victory.

To Rome a peril clings, like fallen clouds;
Out of the north, to Rome, thy tempest whirls
Its purging fiery pillar.

Now let thy poem be, Italy,
Both seen and heard.
Rome weaves through evening's silence her shouted word
Into an insurrection of delight.
She weaves a tapestry —
Through the warp of the air,
The woof of the patterns of her ecstasy
Dartles and hangs and swings, loud-floating there.
She weaves her torches through the black mat of night,
And thrilling threads of flaring hearts, more bright;
And into a wild bewildering roar
Her multitudinous shuttles pour
The poet-tribune, mobbed by jubilation,
Wheeled on a chariot-throne of exultation.
What Caesar's Rome
Brought such a pageant home?

Beyond that chanting blaze
Of light's processional through the sinking dark,
Bülow and his Italian shadow crouch.

The knives cringe back,
The fingers tremble,
Afraid to stab
Thy faith and honor,
Standing circled in the light,
Beyond the dark and his penumbra's blight!

Then, gushing out, thy burning wrath's
Passionate denunciation,
Volcanic through d'Annunzio,
Treason consumes to ashes, fleeing Rome.

'Tis mid-May: ruddy as the morning sun,
Spring, bursting through the winter of the world,
Around thee flings the flaming rose of war, —
Fragrant as angels over nightshade use
To put to death the noxious weed of evil, —
Red-woven to a scarlet coronal

ITALY REVEALED

Set in the tresses of mysterious night
Over unfathomable shining eyes.

The second seal stands loosed: thy frowning book
A gleaming messenger of vengeance shows,
Like red coals staring out of cloudy wrath
In at the murderous serpent coiled in man.

III

War grips thy mountains at a bound:
Hunting the Hapsburg whelps,
Thy bold Alpini swing from crag to crag,
Fighting earth, air, snow, ice, hunger — and man!

Twelve months thy sword victorious climbs the Alps,
A signal in the night.
Thy bayonets prick the Turk, menace the sly
Flesh-eating jackal of Bulgaria.
But Serbia, shattered, Montenegro, mangled,
And bruised Albania, lean against thy finger,
Stretched down to help all three.
And Verdun, sacrificial Verdun, bleeds,
Heaping her altar with the blood of France.
The world stoops faint, in sackcloth, sorrowful.
Like a black mist, discouragement covers the earth.

Only around thy head lives light —
Over the northern mountains
Thrown like a halo from the silver band
Of six score ransomed towns that crown thy brow,
Wreathed in a curve from lofty Stelvio
Four hundred miles to Carso's horny beak,
Watching the Adriatic.

Thy hills wear light: huddling to smother it,
The crafty dragon of the Danube shrugs
Her mottled foldings through the Trentino, looped
In gorge and coiled on peak.
Soon as thy war's first year new mid-May meets,
The wyvern strikes thy buckler — strikes and strikes,
As furious torrents ram a dam to seize
The shuddering land below.
Thy sons fight, backward staggering, step by step,
To where the verge o'erhangs their homes: there stand,
A rocking barrier on a dizzy brink,
Through May, through June, six weeks, — a tumult, scrambled,
Of earth and air and sky and waterfloods,
Armies and rocks and mountains, sweating blood.

Hate, hydra-headed, swarms: two thousand throats,
Arched from the Val Sugana to the Val
Lagarina, five score to the mile,
Bark flaming death and cough up killing gas

ITALY REVEALED

Out of their black abysses. These have crunched
Antwerp, Liège, Laon, Ivangorod,
And Brest-Litovsk, strongholds of Belgium, France,
Russia, and Poland. Hooded and puffed, they strike,
Horribly animated to mutilate,
Aching to fang thy right flank from the rear,
And seize and throttle, through her unguarded door,
France, forspent at Verdun.

Flushed stands thy third seal loosed: we see the power
That upheaves towns and crumbles fortresses,
Unanchoring iron out of masoned stone
As Samson tore the gates of Gaza up —
See the gross demon of the night of evil
Recoil from Justice, soldiering in man's heart
That foams and gallops, wild and violent,
In the long agonism of good 'gainst evil.

Hell's horror clings through June. In hot July,
Back, snarling, dripping, slinks the baffled fiend,
As, by indomitable Alpini led,
Like flames ascending up a rising wind,
With garlands on their helms, through smiling lips,
Thy irresistible children, Italy,
Scourge with the songs of their spirit, lashing guns
That know not how to answer, being cast
Only to tear the flesh! The bruised dragon
Flees, rolling up the mountain; round thy sons
The light of God still walks the shining Alp!

Prefigured in a semblance, here forethrown
On the Trentino, as against a screen,
Thy loosed third seal predicts great wrath to come —
The victory of anguish, long dragged out,
Walking the furnace of the forge of God
Toward Italy redeemed.
Often as rushes the swift leviathan
To overwhelm us through the broken dike of earth,
God thrusts thy spirit, Italy, in the gap!

IV

Three acts have staged their play; four haste them on.
Thy fourth seal stirs, the number of a man,
Impetuous to begin. Thy left guard stands
In the Trentino, fainting; like a nerve,
Cadorna swings the right hand of thy power
Across the Isonzo, and Gorizia falls,
As falls Tolmino — falls, to rise redeemed.
August is gladdened by that staggering blow.
September sees thee seize San Grado so —
Sees thy assistance of her cause
Lift wearied Verdun into a pause.
October eyes thy serpent-cutting sweep

ITALY REVEALED

Far up and on and into the Carso leap.
November sees thee stun that same plateau
With a new overthrow.
Twice five thy victories in that craggy war
That earth and heaven blots into one scar.

The miracle of human spirit ran
Unloosed in thy fourth seal,
Whose prodigies reveal
The glory of the stature of a man.
By children, women, and by men,
In ice and heat, in storm and sun,
What man can do is done,
Calling the age of exploits back again.
Hail, Alpini, lions of the rocks!
Hail, winged Titans, eagles of the sky!
Hail, Arditti, tigers of the trench,
With bombs and knives — and fingers in a throat!
Hail, soldiers, victors on the Alp!
Hail, sailors, conquerors at sea!
Hail, valiant women and heroic children,
Grinding at your tasks, warring in your hearts!
Hail, King and Queen,
Man and woman glorified,
Battling on the front, fighting at the sick-bed,
Loved in all the land, and honored in the earth!
Hail, Italy, blazoned in the badge of God,
The decoration of a million wounds!

What billows roll the music of that epic?
What thunders crash the chorus?
Trumpet your psalms, ye Alps!
Create a symphony
Of blending land and sea!
And listen, all ye sons of Italy!

Let San Martino and Cortina sing,
Whose shaggy-gleaming eyes grew eloquent,
Watching their freed kin where your swift advance,
Cracking the iron of the Austrian keep,
Unchained the giants of the Dolomites.
And let the tidal choral, tuned to these,
The Adriatic and Ionian Seas,
Tell how your convoys through their waters sprang,
Steering the Serbs to Corfu and Valona,
Where all our anxious navies learned to foil
Ubiquitous submarines and perilous mines.
Let charmed Zarola out of her thrilling breast
The tempest of a deep contralto fling,
To sing around you, heroes, how she saw
You climb the shoulder of her towering mate
And off the Altissimo of Monte Baldo brush
Crawling invaders like a swarm of ants
Into the vengeful chasm.

ITALY REVEALED

Ransomed Trieste, tell how, through your soul,
Drooping in bondage to demonic hate,
The wing of expectation flew, as swiftly
Into your port the Istrian Sauro sped,
Swooped down a ship, and like a hawk whirled out;
So doing, repetitious, till they slew him.
Tune your loud torrents, Monte Pasubio,
And chant the anthem of the gallant fight
That round your loins hung victory for a girdle,
Buying your freedom with a holocaust.
Ring out, Durazzo; chime four different deeds
That awed your harbor on as many days
From four torpedo-boats: how each pounced in,
Devoured a dragon-ship, and soared away.
Hearken, ye engineers! hark, and rehear
The orchestras of a thousand hills rehearse
The oratorio of a thousand scores
That mid reverberating plaudits sang
Your fearful blowing up of Castelletto.
And listen, while Trieste trills again
Her glee when gallant Rizzo rocked her bay,
Blasting a battle-monster, blowing another,
Gaping and paralyzed, against the sea.
Cry, Monte Cucco, wonderments of May
That made your passion kiss their soldier-feet
That leaped incredibly Isonzo's gorge
And ran up rocky barriers. Pola, sound
Daring as wonderful, when Pellegrini
With only three companions at your feet
A dreadnought slew, torpedoed. Sing, ye joys
Of saved Bainsizza; every August wake
The prickly hills that stud your thorny plain
Into an anniversary carnival
To vivify again and celebrate
Glorious achievements that the Julian Alps
Perceived with wild amazement! Italy there
Leaped like a cub through Austria's scampering camps,
O'er thousands, prisoner, and, spectre-like,
Stood beckoning on Hermada, o'er the rim
That bristles round Trieste! Answer, waves
That swim the Adriatic, roll us out
Your song of Rizzo and two motor-boats,
Sixteen heroic men and four torpedoes,
That broke the guarding wall of ten destroyers,
And, killing both the giant dreadnoughts there,
Entombed them in your sheol! Airy heights,
And steep aerial valleys, dizzy skies,
Rainbows, and high-winds, and ye oft-congealed,
Recuperating clouds, speak out, declare
What human hawks, man-falcons, dove among you,
Hunting their prey: what climbing seas they sailed,
O'er strongholds throwing down resounding death,
Warning like balanced eagles scared Vienna,

ITALY REVEALED

Pouncing on ships and ramparts out of skies,
Down-swooping into battle-fields through mists
As lightnings out of storm-clouds riddle earth,
And chasing regiments and skimming trees
Like insect-scooping swallows. Rouse the south,
Freed Monte Santo; pitch a key to reach
San Gabriele in the north till he
Makes a duetto of deliverance,
Thrilling Isonzo on his lofty tongue
Till all the echoing regions round cry out,
"What bells peal out of heaven?" Let him say,
Was not the fight that crashed around his crest,
Lighting a taper through the darkened world,
As if the archangel of his name had sparred
With dense, surrounding, cloudy hosts of hell,
Till Michael, with the swords of God, had come,
Angels and men, blaring on seraph-trumps,
To rescue glory and restore the light?

A limit rims the coinage of man's power,
Though imaged in the mint and die of God.
Yet we man's emblem, in thy fourth seal stamped,
Behold henceforward and forever see —
Topping the utmost peak, high over the ledge
That builds the boldest eagle's windy nest,
In dark-limned outlines, man, a sable crest,
On rocks and ice, a black and silver wreath,
Above a field of Alpine snows, the white
Of a shield argent, vast, and issuant
Out of a golden coronet and flames
Of ribs of sunrise curled around his feet —
This on thy seal and mountains we behold,
The figure of thy glory on the Alp,
Man's silhouette engraven in the sky!

V

Blow, organ, blow,
Plaintive and slow,
For a world's hope in Italy laid low!

At last our dragging feet, slow trailing thine,
Have pledged our rusted sword, that six months toils
Behind thy spring and summer victories
To build a forge and hammer out our strength.
Then sudden comes the eclipse of thy October —
Death's glazing eye, and autumn's.
October — feverish in his caving house;
The last red rush of apoplectic life!
October — when the armies of the wood,
Brittle and fallow, fly before the blast!

God tempers with fire the steel of man's spirit,
Handling our edge so tight it only cuts
Our destiny where His grip clenches ours.

ITALY REVEALED

About to thrust in heat our weapons all,
He flings thy falchion foremost.
Thus, Italy, in thy book,
The brief and index of our cause,
The days of agony begin to write.
Yet if God's anguish angelize our way,
It posts around the end its guard of light.

By double treachery tricked, and double-stabbed,
Great Russia withers — fallen, doubly fallen.
And fallen shrinks Rumania at her side.
The dragons, from the carcase of the east,
Swing up their gulping necks,
To swivel every coil around the west —
To crack thee, Italy, then France constrict.

As Moses over Egypt stretched the rod
That bred the east wind through a day and night
Into a morning drenched with locust clouds
That quenched with killing pools each greening thing,
So, Italy, from the rod stretched over thee,
Out of the east an ominous rustle scouts,
Lifting a lying tongue among the trees.
A day, a night, and out of whispers blown,
Over the Julian and the Carnic Alps
The dragon of the east wind rears and strikes.

Hissing the startled hills,
She coils and rears and strikes,
As thunders rear and bellow
And coil and roar and hiss.
Glaring among the shrinking trees,
She coils and rears and strikes,
As wicked lightnings gleam and dart
In the tongue and eye of night.

Thy trees are swaying. They exclaim together.
Their souls are afflicted. They are sore afraid.
They cringe from the striker. They bend down backward.
They swerve to heaven. They rock from side to side.
They strain to escape, but they cannot.
The lashings of death rail upon them.
Their veins swell up with poisons of sheol.
Out of the clouds of the blackness of the locusts of the pit.
They sting them to fury. They drive them mad.
Their heads wave together. They tug in frenzy.
They leap. They pitch.
In the sweat of the fear of the strength of their anguish
They wrench their feet out of the earth and crash against the hills.

Thy leaves are flying. They dance before the dragon.
Thy red leaves cry out in the venomous air
Like hearts of men in the torments of hades.

ITALY REVEALED

Like darting flocks of frightened birds
They shoot the slopes of Monte Nero,
Dashing, swirling, clambering over mountains,
Clamoring among the hills,
Covering the Alps with terror,
Falling in the valleys and choking up the streams,
Where the leap of the locust devours them —
Child and maid and the babe with her mother.

Earth mirrors in her grey and ghastly face,
Swung like a pendulum to the swaying rage
That drives thy hurrying leaves, their blighting fear,
Where flying torments never couched in words,
Abnormal as the gouging touch of hell,
Misshapen, foul, distorted warps of dread,
Besplashed with every hue of woe and death,
Yellow as rotting parchments, black as plagues,
Hectic as fevered cheeks round burning eyes,
Red as rashes, white as lepers, speckled as pox,
Grisled as skeletons startled out of tombs —
All shapes and tints and attitudes of terror
That out of Caporetto stream and wail
Like flying meteors through a darkened land,
Waving their shadows up above the earth,
Fling all their terrifying ghosts across
The visage of the world.

Let the earth pray. Let Italy fall on her face.
Let the peoples cry out of sackcloth.
Will not the God of mercy hear?
The King is with his men, his broken heart
Ascending up to heaven, and bending down to the land.
Let God fulfil the promise of the King's name:
Victor — "God with us!"
The Queen of her people implores their God,
The soul of her love melted within her,
The lifted hands of her toil crying aloft.
The women of Italy writhe in distresses,
Their hearts poured out into their bended knees.
Fear, ye wicked, the sword of the prayer of faith.

Be strong, Diaz! Gather the youth of the land together,
The old man, the boy, the straggler broken from rank,
To reenforce the rout, to make a stand at the river.
They fly, they wade, they sink, they swim the Tagliamento.
Stand! stand! stand! They fly; they will not stand.

Be strong, Diaz! Gather the youth of the land together,
The old man, the boy, the cripple crumpled by war,
To push against the flight, to stand with God at the river.
They flee, they surge, they dive, they splash across the Livenja.
Stand! stand! stand! they flee; they will not stand.

ITALY REVEALED

Be strong, Diaz! Gather the youth of the land together,
The old man, the boy, the angels camping their wrath.
In the azure tent of God the cry of Italy kneeleth.
They come like sheep that leap the wash of the wool at the shearing,
Quavering through the stream, gasping out of the water.
Stand! stand! stand on the brink of the Old Piave!
Stand! stand! stand! They pause, they halt, they stand.
The number of their king is there.
The Breaker of Italy's seals hath loosed
The anagram of God-with-man.
They gather; they lean against God
On the edge of the rim of the river.

Ye bayonets of Britain and France,
Why trench behind the Adige?
Omnipotence pitches the wall of the land
On the margin of the Piave.

Hail, wall of life, damming death and evil!
Hail, wall of light, firm as the sway of angels;
Burnished with fire of seraphim,
Incensive, gloriabile around,
Numerous-eyed and numerous-winged,
All standing by unseen!

VI

Through frozen winter and unthawing spring
Her frosted courage to the old earth clung,
Or hibernated in a drawled suspense.

Prepare, ye nations! Lest the earth should say,
"I have delivered me with my own right hand,"
Ye drink of the gall-wine's bitter with Italy,
France and England staggering in the coil,
America unhelpful, until God
On Italy's bank reopen victory.

As the malicious spirit, barred in ice,
Foments his rancor till the homing sun,
Melting the lock, unjails him, and then enters
The freshet's supple body, driven mad
By meditations murderous that pitch
Demoniac fury down the roaring gorge
In a debauchery of destruction; so,
Out of the Arctic and the icy east
Piling his convolutions' catapult,
With hate so hot it fires the bitter cold,
The homicidal dragon of the north
Sways, preening to the hissing of the blast,
Before the fascinated soul of France,
Whetting the murder of his cruel eyes,
That pop with venom and with cunning glare,
Plotting to seize the vernal equinox
And chariot on its wing across the trench.
He calls his mate; but, in the fiery menace

ITALY REVEALED

And blistery grapple of Italy's burning soul,
She dare not swerve a flank nor shift an eye.
We watch our hope in pawn between the dragons —
The wedge that splits the forking tongue of hell.

Hold the Piave! Heart of Italy, stand!
Each sunrise swings a pontoon in the bridge
That we, adventurous like thy Genoese,
To pay his new world's debit to his old,
Build back along the ocean-trail he blazed.

We strain, America! Double your haste;
Put spurs to energy; larrup the task!

What fury howls? The winds of March wrench out,
And in their lunge the dragon of the north,
From gashed Saint-Quentin, out of racked Cambrai,
Encoils the British vitals, whelmèd back.
Brave England buckles. Ravenous, the fangs
Probe to the heart and reins. Bapaume is down;
Bril falls, and Péronne; the long-suffering Somme
Is tottering to the fringe of Amiens.

Shall bending Britain break? Our engineers
Drop spade for gun and die against the gap.
O that our strength were there!
Our boys sit bivouacked: O for ships, the ships
To march them through the sea!

The crusher lags, sheers off the British shank,
Nursing his hurt and cluttering his coil.
His mate stirs sibilant to his beckoning hiss.

Italy, cling! The nations, like a shutter,
Rock on the hinge of their hope,
Swung from the nail of thy valor.

We twist on the nerve of our anguish:
Be swift, America!

What month wails meagre in, bleached with despair?
Is this young April, darling of the year?
A worm is in the bud. The north wind yells,
Rocking life's cradle to the dragon's stroke.
The unhealed scabs of Flanders, raw again,
Rip, moaning, off their sores.
The British blade from Ypres to Arras shakes,
Crooks at the center to the serpent, props
The soul of England in her bout with death,
Her grim back 'gainst the sea.
The fangs droop baffled, like a criminal
That cannot awe his judge.

ITALY REVEALED

Italy, watch the saurian! Blazy-eyed,
Her gorge grows wicked to her mate's distress!
Clench the last ounce! Over the arching trail —
The span thrown out of England, and our span,
Spliced in mid-ocean — double-quick, our boys
Swing to France, singing. Lock your clutch and cling!

Hung in a grapple on the river's rim,
Against our agony,
This body raveling from this denuded soul,
We grip the gnawing lizard to our pain!

May throbs in squalling, like the life of man
That, born in rosy buds, breaks swagging down
Into red dews of death. All scarlet wrath,
The great red dragon bloods the bloom of France
From Noyon unto Rheims.
May's pinky whites stain into bleeding crimsons
Around the strangled month — her blossoms bleaked,
Her wheat-fields flailed, her vine and terrace swooning.
God save thee, France! the coils unkink again,
Swimming the Aisne, Soissons enveloping,
Entangling trouble in the ruddied Marne.
One lurch away, unterrified Paris wipes
Hate-snortled virus out of her smarting eyes.

Perched on his cowardice behind war's risk,
A grizzly wraith, the parody of Satan,
In rattling armor clothed, and railing speech,
Champs Hohenzollern, shaking bloody words
Out of his heart, and, off his bloody steel,
A red rain on the earth.

Screw the last nerve to courage, Italy!
One turn of the capstan warps us in.

Our knuckles clamp around the dinosaur
Like wrath round hell's rim!

May ends in pangs; June enters, crying out
In pain to be delivered. Cruel midwives,
North winds abrade her, while the embrangling snake
Constricts maternity into violence,
Where, eyes in sorrow, bowing on her bed,
June bears war's monstrous birth of life and death.

Be valiant, Italy, this wailing day
A woe and a deliverance are born.
An omen: Château-Thierry sees our sons
Shunt back the death-lunge shot at Paris.

Enraged, that his cankerous fangs
The heart of France should miss,
The monster flags his mate
In a red-slaverling hiss.

ITALY REVEALED.

Look to her, Italy! Her hatred curls
Round Asiago, smothering his plain.
She spools her wrath round Grappa, strangling him,
With his Ferrara in her winding sheath.
Her covetous fangs lust, lanky, lickerish.
Her tongue laps murder, thirsty as the pit.
Her famished dartings knit across the Piave,
Bridging the banks with needles in thy flesh.
Zenson reels, tortured. Il Montello's rent.
The Piave leaks from Capo Sile south.

Her withering poisons cramp thy jerking thews,
And spray thy seeing into cloudy night.
Thy soul recedes from the jar of her impact,
From the sickening thud of her coil on thy chest.
Back over thy spine thy shoulders jut like cliffs,
Their vigor bent like Pisa's leaning tower,
Inclining in a perilous crisis, swaying
Like Pisa's vertigo in a powerful wind.
Thy strength is pendulous: elastic spirit's
Return steers upright, forward, outward, leaning
Far over the Piave, sword inclined
Aslant the cringing dragon, cutting deep.

Thy parched avengement quaffs her, Italy,
Quenched to the hilt at Castalunga.
She's tapped at Zenson, half the spigot out.
Her liquors spurt, more gules than Red-Sea water.
'Tis drink and bright apparel: she attires
Thy hurts in dripping gifts —
Clothes Il Montello in her scarlet raiment,
The mantle of her blood,
And Capo Sile wraps in crimson garments,
The ebbing of her strength.
Prodigal with the anilines of death,
She stains thy kirtle gorgeous.

The heavens chastise her wickedness,
Rolling their thunders against her ear,
And plumbing her heart with the prongs of lightnings.
They spue her out of their mouth,
With breath of tempests, in spital of storms.
The torrents swarm upon her.
The floods rise out of their bed to maul her.
The passion of the Piave swings his hate,
Sweeping away the bridges, plunging her into wrath.
The river beats her prone, stretched writhing across.
Heaven reproves her with the weapon of man.
She is cupped to the quick; she moults;
Her scales peel, scattered; her flesh flakes off.
Her strained nerve snaps: recoiling through the stream,
Her wounds disturb the red ford of their blood.

ITALY REVEALED

Listen, ye nations, to the Triumpher, God,
Blowing the clarion of the Alps to thrill
Her hour of victory through the widowed earth!

VII

Under two flaming swords and cherubim,
Stars facing, sun to sun, their amberous wings
Curving plumed shoulders up a golden arch,
Thy sixth and seventh seals stand, Italy,
Twin victors, like twin angels double-bloomed
Out of the twin-bud thy fifth seal disclosed,
Of Godhead loaning man His agony
To wrestle darkness on the brink of life.
Thy radiant sixth around her sister sparkles
Her mystic number of the deliverance
Of victory over evil well begun;
And thy exultant seventh on tiptoe raises
Her number to the glorious cherubim,
To loose the mystery of her warfare finished
Into the sabbath of a perfect work.
The touch of glory instantly unseals
The jeweled swords of five victorious months,
Keen as the eye of the eagle's swooping wing,
Stern as the coals of the wrath the heavens fling,
Warring with war to kill the accursèd thing.

July comes, torch and blade. As once his heat
Resolved the charter of our liberties,
And razed the Bastille, melted down off men,
So now the vehemence of his anger smokes
To burn away from freedom another hell.
He sends thee, Italy, his first four days
To scorch the dragon's hope on Monte Grappa,
And bids his sixth day singe the last of her
Off the Piavian delta's wrinkled throat.

The dinosaur, subdued,
On bank and hill and plain
Wails her curdled brood,
Two hundred thousand slain.
The earth throws eyelids wet
Up sparkling into light,
Where Alpine signals set
Judgment's return to Right.
Allies, out with glaives! advance!
Delve the dragon out of France.

The strangler round the June-scream of his mate
Had flung a coil; but no coercive cry
Ransacks his succor from her sprawling wound.
Eyeing thee, Italy, out of France, his glare
Lights on thy outstretched valor ramping through
Albania; sees it swinge his warmate off

ITALY REVEALED

Vayusa, Malacatra Heights, and, coursing
Astride the Orsum, comb her from Berat;
And spies her, in the scuffle in the bend
Of the Devoli, south of Elbasan,
Pitched from Iozi, Mali Siloves' crest,
Back drooling to the Skumbi.

His bristling fury in its own shadow sees
Thy striplings, Italy, retrieving France:
Three hundred thousand at the thrilling task
Of guardianer of Rheims.
Thy sturdy slips he scowls at — olive-tinctured,
Tinting whole forests of our sapling pines,
Dug off the husky slopes of liberty
To reenforce the sap and pith of France
And spread a shelter over her despair.

He dare allow no pause to loll against
Our daily thickening of armament.
Ferocious frenzies through his wicked eyes
Dart to impale their newest foes. He throws
His long death-struggle, thrashing in the earth,
The wrenched old planet creaking on her posts.
Four fiendish days and four demoniac nights,
Across the vale of Ardre, Italy,
The bars of thy flesh go banging to and fro,
Pounding the slamming blasts unpacked from the pit.
Four murderous days and slaughterous nights assault
Rheims' coat of mail — the interlinking plates
Of Italy's lives — where death falls, glancing off
Panoplied Rheims, screened Épernay, masked Châlons.
Four days and nights the gambling dice of hell
Rattle against thy ribs, and lose the throw.

From four climbed days and nights the tide-wave 's pushed
One foot-slip down the ebb. Like Italy's brave,
America's with Gouraud shield Champagne,
Defend Châlons, and, 'gainst the shifting Marne,
Hanging their pluck in the way of the serpent,
Cling to that gate of Paris with their souls,
And almost with the fury of bare hands
Thrust back the outrageous dragon.

The trump of thy June battle, Italy,
Winds through July's stout spirit not in vain.
He gazes past the brazen skies, and sees
Our battle-weight pull down the golden scale,
God's glory in the bowl. Storm-helm and cloud,
That helped the Piave, rage around us now,
Between the Marne and Aisne, spinning our strands
Into the gossamer of the long grey mist,
Drumming to silence our advancing noise
With gun-fire out of heaven.

ITALY REVEALED

God weaves us into the night and wet
Till the tangled serpent swings in our net.

Out of the pillar and cloud of God,
Mangin, Pétain, Foch, and France,
Pershing, and America,
Thunder the dragon to the sod,
Javelined with lightning's lance.
God's hammers clang him there,
Writhed in a gnarled despair,
Against the anvils of the steel of Italy.
By day, by night, in his flaring forge, July,
Blowing his fires pitiless-high,
With iron mallet on the warping thing,
Rimmed to our hoop of scathing arms that sear it,
Around, against our incensed ring,
Pestles the dragon's bulk and spirit.

The blazing wrath of sweating August swears
A shriveling vengeance to sear out his stain,
Blotched four years past, when hydrophobic hate,
Snapping among the dog-days, bit them mad,
Gnashing the whole world into crazy war.
August has weighed our metal, peering through
The gadding curtains of the skies: he knows
What bayonets our marching sea-lane throws,
Three hundred thousand, unto each new month.
These in a wracking avalanche he crashes,
And Soissons, salvaged from the crusher, lives;
While the maimed demon, skulking from the Ourcq,
Where fighting palls him, twists around the Vesle
His snarled resistance in a knot of rage.

Where murder's garroting loop rubs Amiens;
Fierce August stokes the furnace of his wrath
Under the grill of Haig's men, flamed to crisp
The creeper's edge with broiling bars, that spark
The prairie boys of Illinois afire,
Inflammable sons of Lincoln and of Grant
That smelt the ebbing monster off Chipilly.
Norward the conflagration chars the coil,
Crackling from strangled towns, out of whose corse —
Marred Bapaume, blemished Noyon — haggard ghosts
Faint back against the scrawny arm of France.
August, well done! Thrust red between thy tongs,
Fear's hot coal scalds the leathern heart of hate,
Where Hohenzollern's throne haunts him, aslope.

What sable-plumy crest
Waves war-cry? 'Tis September's,
Whose unavenged unrest
Through four black years remembers
Horrors, whose great welts are

ITALY REVEALED

Ridged throbbant through his heart, an ulcering scar.
He watched the hideous heel advance,
Dripping the crunch of Belgium's bones,
Swaggering on the breasts of France,
Grinning through her groans,
Almost wading to his lust,
The grinding into blood and dust
Of the old-young face of Paris.

Always his days have greedily recalled
How through the Marne grim Joffre that horror mauled;
And, angel of the vengeance of the Somme,
He waves the scorpion of Britain on.
It stings: Péronne's redeemed. It flogs a breach
In the red boa from Drocourt to Queant.
We gash the curling mangler past the Vesle;
And, from the Oise to Rheims, with France we shear'
And tear and fold it, ragged, back to Condé,
Like tailors ripping cloth.

Verdun's vendetta cries: September nods;
And, swift as words, the knights of Pershing whip
The serpent's crook off Mihiel at a crack;
And grip it in the Argonne, snake and den
And jungle lashing through the earth and sky,
Choked in our clutch — to cling to crime's convulsion
Till death has rattled through it.

These are the days of over-tortured earth's
Recovery out of shell-shock, morn by morn
Hearing the whetstone on God's rhythmic scythe
Mowing the haunch of murder back to hell.

The ardors of thy reapers, Italy,
In these crusading tasks to gather France
Out of the abyss, from dawn to dawning toil —
Even as thy stamina on the Piave's marge
Makes what is possible.
And eastward now September
Invokes the fellowship of thy limber arm
Against a cunning beast, and, lo,
Thy aid heaps up the Macedonian blow
That drops Bulgaria's red tool into woe.
And a far crash the gibbering Turk appals:
Down through his crumbling empire's sagging walls,
Out of his hand, ancient Damascus falls.

Striding up the mirrors of the sky,
October's red-gold torch and brand flare nigh.
Yet ere he quits, September's ire must try
To break the Hindenburg line.
That never has budged for man or gun or mine.

ITALY REVEALED

Ho, Italy, they come: black-diamond eyes
Flash Italy from these yellow strings of beads,
Threaded on khaki, charging for New York —
The high, uplifted giant of the skies
That swings earth's western gate toward liberty
Above the crouching nations.

They'll crack old Hindenburg, or their own hearts.
They run, swerve, fall, creep, lift, trip, stagger, stumble,
The sons of freedom in the twisting snake,
Spectral, before, around, behind, among them,
A Proteus, up from subterranean lairs
His helly forms all simultaneous rearing.
No sooner do we think the battle won,
Than new fangs stab our flanks that, wheeling, see
Dizzy eruptions through the old cracked earth —
The virulent eczema of the oozing pit,
Inflamed in all its pores, exuding fiends.
So seeing, still we fight, fall, creep, up-stagger,
And, falling, creeping, staggering, fight until
The Hindenburg line drops broken into hell.

Italy, taps! the frosted plume commands:
October, gorgeous in his golden mail,
Remembering Caporetto.
Taps! prepare a toil with rest;
Then, up at réveillé.
Leaping with conquering dreams,
Make real what but seems,
Ripping the dragon's crest.

The eye of his purpose set to Italy's clock,
By slaying the saurian to doom her mate,
October drives the dragon of the north,
Dragging Saint-Quentin from the haggled snake,
And tattered Cambrai, shrunk Laon, and Homs,
And Ostend, Lille, old Douai, and their kin.

Straught Belgium, in her right mind rearrayed,
Sits in the gates of Bruges, her coasts redeemed,
The streaming fragments of the smotherer's power,
Like a great fungus, creeping toward the north,
Savè where our sons in Argonne-Forest latch
Hate's throat in death and hem his heart in judgment.

Leaving the strangler in our stricture caught,
On Caporetto night, loud trumpeting,
Dripping blood-crimson flame, October's sword
Flares on the Brenta and the glad Piave.
Up, Italy! with the wrath of heaven
Sickle the great deliverance given.

Judgment, thundering out of Monte Grappa,
Leaps roaring on the rocks of Asiago,
Under the gleaming eyes of startled night,

ITALY REVEALED

Who springs awake, her black flanks on the mountain
Plunging like frightened steeds.
A palsied rumble grips the throat of earth,
Coughing and hiccoughing a sanguine death
That clutters and coagulates the air.

The dragon rolls from sleep,
Pitched out by noises and a noxious hail:
Hissing and belching like the smudgy pit,
She murderously wraps the Italian armies,
Their tussle tramping down the shuddering dark.
The hours behold it, muttering to heaven,
While night, grown paler, down the mountain roams,
Moaning against the woods,
Entangling in her hair the shivering trees.

The eyelids of the morning, red and sore,
Lift heavy out of vigils, opening slow
The eye of day, all bloodshot, draggling garments
Splashed and bedabbled in the blood of earth.
He stares upon the foes, too strung to know it.
His light enrages them: their tearing sinews,
Streaking the sky with spots of splattering death,
Make day more hideous than savage night.

Let wickedness rumple this plateau and peak,
Light locked in darkness, day in night, until
The dragon's throes drip limply, trickled thin
As sievy earth sifts seeping rains; until
The number here of Italy's fated sons
Is twenty thousand perished, and the hurt
Groan, sixty thousand souls.

The army of thy right hand's picking up
The islands of the Piave, Italy,
While two of thy armies strain, amphibious,
Sagging from either bank down through the river.
Why do the heavens weep around the battle?
And why does the flood let swollen eyes o'erflow
The bridges, crashing through his tears,
Leaving thy hope imperilled?

But God sends courage where
Pent Italy might despair.
His anger's not in nature, as before,
And courage can pry open her shut door.
He bids thy engineers rebuke the river,
Arguing in the friendly mask of night,
Under the stings of the demonian hiss;
And bridges rise, and swim: thy armies cross,
And firm, with legs astride the Piave, fight
Like two great pillars of a mighty land.

ITALY REVEALED

The dinosaur sways deceived,
Caught in the vail around her heart,
The cunning of her fire-eyes steeped
In folly straight before her.
She winds up her strength on Monte Grappa,
Mindless of the winding fingers
Coiling round her coil like death round death.
But, wondering at her, under eager brows
Valdobbiadene sees it from afar;
And bright Solize sees it, peeping out
Over the edges of her shining bank.

Under October's mask of golden haze,
Diaz deceived her with a regiment,
Sons of Ohio and the woods of Penn,
Whose daily march of new accoutrements
Out of Troviso, stealing in at night,
Aroused the laughter of the Carnic Alps,
To see the dragon damped and Italy thrilled
With courage as our Blobdingnagians take
The stature of three hundred thousand men.
They leap the Piave, and the saurian broods
Scurry ghost-haunted through Venetia
And into the Tagliamento plunge their fear,
Chased by the armies of one regiment.

The Slinger hurls thee, Italy, out of His wrath
Straight to the heart of the cause and guilt of the war.

Thou hast trapped the black night in the mountains
And broken her flank on thy wheel,
Heaving the power of her crest
Into the valley of retribution.

October sings over the peaks,
Across the plains, and the valleys of rivers,
Dragon's-blood splashing on tree and bush.
Her scales, that swim on his blade,
Fly into the air like sparks of rainbows,
Sprinkling forest and thicket and grass —
Green and yellow and red scales,
And brown and speckled and crimson.

The leaves clap hands, and laugh at themselves,
In pied costumes of scales and blood
As in a day of carnival.
They sing the song of her judgment,
Strumming on the wind.
Dancing showers rinse out of the sky
The memory of Caporetto;
And the good old sun walks out, all tenderly
Leaning on his daughter, Italy,
Touching her sorrows with the hues of heaven.



ITALY REVEALED

The old and new months in the midst of work
Swap saddles in the field,
One loth to quit, and one imperious
To glut his vengeance to a sudden end.
Done — in too bright a flash for mortal eye!
Without a lull in battle, swerve, or blench,
Or jar, where Diaz and his armies sweep,
October's gone — November's crashing blade
Gallops the charger, furious as he.

Abrupt November arms eleven days:
Three at both dragons' throats, eight more at one.
With double falchions, forged for double tasks,
Three victoring days serve France and Italy,
A sword in each; and in the Meuse-Argonne
The serpent's power is broken in the neck,
And keen Americans like greyhounds lope
To spill his death-wound there.

Around the dinosaur, Italy,
Three knighted days with flashing falchions leap
From peak to peak, and down thy river banks,
Where the Piave and the Brenta wind
Their ribbons out on sea-spools; chasing death
Off Monte Grappa, Monte Pertica,
Montello, and their fellows, driving her
Down off the ridges to the Pisse's brink;
And off Fonzazo and Quero, thrown
Into the vale between; and, northward, sweep her
Off Monte Baldo, through the Valle Arsa,
From Revereto, out of Trento; scourge her
South-easterly across the recovered plains
And ransomed valleys of Venetia,
Beyond Belluno, and beyond Udine,
Thrilling Trieste with her dream come true,
And freeing Pola, singing to the sea —
Leaping from vales to hills, from peaks to valleys,
Unmanacled the towns, unchaining rivers,
November's vengeance and his firstborn days
Destroy the dragon and unhook her spoil,
Seizing a half a million of her brood
Alive, and piling up a countless dead
On the heaped mountains and in choked ravines,
Like lost leaves out of tempest-stricken woods.

The end is come
Of guilty centuries of greedy wrong:
Surviving victims and dead martyrs strow
Their exultations on her whimpering woe.

The dragon of the Danube,
That through thy mountain rolls,
Red-writhing in her death,

ITALY REVEALED

Doth she repent our slain souls,
In her expiring breath?

The strange amalgamation of old hates
Undoes her metals: see,
Out of her crumbled thigh and belly gush
The swallowed nations, free!

'Tis done! 'tis done!
Down the angelic sky
Let a hymn cry,
"The war is won!"

'Tis done! November, in a peal of lights,
Flares eight days thundering round the rim of France,
Through Flanders-field, through clanging Belgian gates,
Through Argonne, crashing to avenge Sedan,
And war is done, the dragon of the north
Whining for mercy under the peoples' feet.

What's in the earth? a storm of shooting stars?
The splitting skies shed crowns and royalties:
By scores, disheveling the firmament,
Princes and dukes and kings and emperors
Shell, parachuting out of tipsy thrones,
Their dribbled glories frayed to purple sparks
That fade in transit like the meteor's flit—
The best decoronation earth has seen.

The peoples slack a sigh through every town:
Out of the muffled years they slip ungagged;
They smile; they laugh; they hum; they sing; they pour
Into the streets like bees at swarming-time,
And shout, grab one another, dance, and yell,
Old men up-kicking heels like yearling colts,
And stately dames kidnapping strangers, shying
Like skittish two-year-olds down crazy streets,
Entangled in confetti, jangling bells,
Tooting tin-horns, and murdering fifes and drums
In wild delirium, under twitching stars
That rub their poor old orbs at giddy earth.
Glee's dizziest madcap fits the world to-night.
Dance on, dear flighty peoples! life has been
Four years suspended at the tip of hell,
Swung from an eyelash—nay, the gossamer thread
Of God's eternal goodness. Dance and sing,
And loose the heart's thanksgiving, psalming Heaven!

'Tis over—acted, done!
Blue-gold, the avengeful sky
Wipes his red weapon into the sheathing cry,
"The war is won!"

ITALY REVEALED

VIII

Here wrath should end. But what fantastic voices,
Like leaves that rattle grave-yards windy nights,
Chatter and scream their antique selfishness,
Till ghostly gabble troubles up an age
We thought long buried under ugly scars
In dark unfathomable hates of war?

Is sense jarred out of cue? Ears think they hear
The old snake-charmers of the Senate Chamber
Beat veto tom-toms and howl incantations,
Lest earth eclipse war with a League of Nations,
And, clipping strife and battle, shear
His wiggeries off the baldness of old greed.
Howl, old dwarf's fistful of anachronists!
Make earth stand still, or trundle back an age!

Is this our world late squeezed, by the skin of her teeth,
Wet-mangled through such agonies as we think?
Has war toiled — incommensurable war —
Four years, destroying earth; or do we dream,
Or waken out of madness?

Surely, we dream. It is not possible
Freedom has spokesmen so insensible
To the world's need, guides so impervious
To the world's light, as to swing brazen tongues,
Where honorable law is weighed, to sully men
Out of man's obligation toward mankind
With words that shame us with their nude appeal
To all that 's basest in what 's crooked in us!

Back from crusading, must America
Suffer in audience, assoiling her,
The same old dragon's hiss of selfishness
She sailed away to punish?
Or is this crawling tickle in our ear
Only the rattle of the dragon's tail
That — like all tails of new-killed snakes, boys tell us —
Wiggles till sundown?

Freedom needs thy example, Italy,
And thy devotion to it.
Thou'rt both a builder of the League of Peace
And one of the chiefest pillars of her house,
Like thy Columbus, seeking a new world
To demonstrate the earth a globe of hope.
Be ever hope our enterprise, that news us,
Vigorous, Italy, alike in thee
And thy discovery, America,
Oldest and youngest of the mightier powers!
Or has thy new bud made the old the youngest?
Then, Italy, if we lag, let thy resurgence

ITALY REVEALED

Rebuke us out of the youngest face of nations,
Risen to serve, the springtide in thy heart,
More human than old Rome!

For 'tis in sacrificial scars of service —
No longer faithless, unbelieving, but
With our own trembling wound-prints thrust in thine —
We know thee, what thou art, one risen indeed
From earth's dark tomb of thousands of years of strife.
'Tis not old savage war thou wearest now —
His murderous, dripping, black-red coronet.
Thou art not crowned of hell,
In the damned glamors wreathed of cursing night,
But throned with holier spell,
Transfigured in the sorrowful scars of Right.

What scalding centuries burn
Hell's lesson in, we learn!
As children, dancing to a vivid snake,
Applaud his vicious lunges, like a game,
We, fascinated, clap war, when his fangs
Through Caesar or Napoleon venom earth,
Though ruinous through lands the charmer glides,
With endless murder in his wicked gleam.

War drafts our virtues and our faults, and adds
Nothing to virtue but degrading dust,
Save war that is crime's strict and just police.
Courage, our soldier-epaulet, we wear
With bulls and dogs and game-cocks, volunteers
That stake a life in battle quick as we,
And pour it out defending what they love.
Courage to risk life in the killing of it
Breeds boldest criminals. 'Tis not too nice
To march with honor, as to charge with vice:
The braveries of the battle-legion ken
The noblest and the wickedest of men.
War drafts and kills, but cannot father valor.
War coins no courage; but the drill of war
Is the great counterfeiter of brave coin,
And passes it, coin current, in the field.
Men, viced 'twixt death and death, war's disciplines
Compel to bout death's chance-jaw at their front,
To void death's sure jaw at desertion's rear;
Whence trapped compulsion dons the helm of zeal.

War little edifies the officer
Who clamps his regiment in gyves of death,
And serves the canons of his killing art
The more he screens himself behind his men,
Great safety growing with high rank, that grabs
War's glory in inverse ratio to hazard.
This ignobility brave shoulder-straps

ITALY REVEALED

Often transgress by risks almost a private's,
And even war blushes to upbraid them for it.
Its stains of cowardice, birth-marking war,
Suggest the inventor — the hallmark of hell.

Unscrupulous strategy, war's chiefest boast,
Gambles with tricks, plots inequalities,
Plants ambuscades, schemes overslaugh with numbers:
The tactics of the wolf-pack, and its glory.
War turns us wolves, and drives out nations, packs
That kill by multitudes, a crime in one man.
Crime, multiplied by nations, equals glory!
Murder retailed is crime; wholesaled, good war!
O hypocritical, inglorious war,
Red, baseborn, bullying cub of violent hell!
Cain taught one-handed murder: thou hast coached us
To multiply it by ten million men
And all our sciences, geared up to kill!

War is the sheriff, or the criminal;
Murder, or retribution's sword run through it.
Four years in pawn to anguish, earth would pump
Out of her system war, the asp of ages.
Let sheriff war end war, the criminal,
Wry-necked in hangman law's avenging knot.
All just war's circumscribed within the sword
Of justice, law, and right; who glorifies it,
Bejewels the hangman. Other war is Cain's,
At Abel with a hell's-brand: kings and peoples;
Who crown them with it, wear the bands of hell.

Only in sheriff's badge can strategy
Serve honorably — an honest deputy
Of the reign of law, who, using strategems
To save good lives, none handcuffs unawares
Save crooks, whose stock-in-trade is tricking justice.

Constabulary warfare, Italy,
Wracking all precedents of the shock of battle,
With body, soul, and spirit thou hast waged
To the extremity of an ardent people,
To pay a priceless ransom for the sins
Of centuries, and get the world reprieved.

Thy heroism was not
In twilight courage, where the unspirituous beast
Takes death without a speculation in it.
Thy half a million lives, that guled thy altar,
Wrenched open-eyed, gold day, and weighed in light
Life's estimation, highest when they gave it,
In passionate despair, that earth might live.

O they were not deceived! not when they knew

ITALY REVEALED

That sin had found us all out, suddenly,
And not the Teuton only, trapped in crime.
'Tis easy to confront the wretch and judge
The deed our guilt has no investment in.
But to be striking at a hideous thing
That is our mirror with our image in it,
Our image magnified, but only to
The logical conclusion of our ways;
For freedom, life, and light, and hope, to wrestle
Our own tough wrong of immemorial days;
To agonize with Satan, yet to fight
Our hearts, ourselves, our fathers' fathers' guilt,
Knowing no people 's clear, no land 's acquitted:
O this is cruel, cruel! for the doubt
If God can choose us starts a leaking wound
Whose siphon lets the courage of the soul.

To the full house of earth war staged his play,
Whose first scenes spoke their lines with double sense,
Their portents waiting in the wings their cue
To out their horrors in the more fearful acts
Staging behind the drop-scene. Actors played
New parts from day to day without rehearsal,
Feeling death's terror as they spoke his lines,
Falling upon his dagger. Thousands stood
Spectators only till insatiate war
Made the whole house his stage, peoples and theatre
Emblazing in a slaughterous hell of wrath.
Ere God's white flame enlightened war's red glare,
Millions expired in dread and mystery,
Hoping they played their death-scene not in vain,
But perishing in the hope.
So died they, over brain and heart baptized
Into the agonies of God's strange work
Of necessary judgment.

What tragedy, pitiful, sleeps with our slain!
There must be in the Heart upholding all hearts —
Through infinite tragedy, beyond our ken —
A terrible compassion for our dead.

Can God be merciful to the greed that ever
On earth proposes wicked war again?
A passion haunts me that could choke that thing,
In king or politician, rave it down
Out of its coil accurst, and crumple it
Into the shadow of an ended snake.

This war 's the nailing of God's heart afresh,
Penumbral round the umbra of His cross
In Whom we live and move and have our being.
As beats the word of His power through all that is,
Felt in the wind, seen in the flower, and heard

ITALY REVEALED

Lustre of service, rainbowed over death,
Flashing the lights of heaven uneclipsed.

Thou art our token, out of tomb and pall,
That God can bring a people from their fall
And make their life peal out a nobler chime.
O never be apostate to His call!
Swing the Torch upward to the last steep of time!

Build God — Whose toiling visions raise
Thy slumbers, Italy, from the dead —
A new cathedral's climbing praise,
With pillared vault and arching spread
Of psalms by raised-up nations said!

Beauty of use and service-stars avow,
Purer than Rome's thy glory risen now.
Some olden dreamer of the golden age,
Met somewhere in thy sleep, we know not how,
Endorsed his promise on thy rising page.
And since God gave thy newer birth
To lure us from our selfish grip,
Let sacrifices still equip
And knight thy serviceable worth,
Till violence learns from stronger ruth,
And all the daughters of the earth,
Some image of thy sheen to win,
Some radiance of Serving Truth, —
God in the hand, as on the lip, —
Come climbing up thy ways, to dip
The garments of their service in
Thy fountain of perpetual youth.



ITALY REVEALED

On trilling boughs, in children, in ourselves
Experienced in each pulse of heart and brain,
So, groaning through all sickness of creation,
His are the burning Eyes of every fever,
The dying Heart of all we kill in war.

Our reckless centuries have been more callous
To God's bruise even than to the hurt of man,
Though Heaven's heart He lowered out of glory
One hour to show us while grief lasts God is
The God of sorrows and acquainted with grief
Beyond the sum of all the sons of men.
As God is, we beheld Him, on His shoulder
Bearing our cross, and made its Curse for us;
And now we see Him newly-nailed to war;
For Love's eternal life, let down from heaven,
Is, as it ever was, in sorrows, chief.
Gashed with war's million wounds, war's million deaths
He dies in the dying, mourns them in the living,
And in the wicked, the aggressors, groans,
Bearing the contradiction of their sin.
The tragedy and waste of war outreaches
Its only compensation to him it teaches
To see Love's crucifixion on earth's cross,
The Weeper over every soldier's grave.

A beauty lingers on the lids of death,
A glory in God's anguish writhing there
In wistfulness so sorrowful despair
Seems like, or near that other hovereth.
Broken, our dust and spirit cling to God's breath;
Yet as we break we seem to see Him stare
Into our wreck upon His finger, where
Our life lies in her ashes, as He saith.
Our grief we know: the Infinite Woe That stands
Silent we'd guess if our poor children lay
Crumbled in our just government to clay,
And dust of some in other, sweeter lands
Our passionate hearts could clutch with eager hands,
But some we never could regain that way.

O Italy, if the Agonies Divine,
More tortured by this war than all the world,
Can lift us into faith out of such sorrow,
Thy half a million have not died in vain.
But all is lost, and nothing can avail,
If Christ be not the Hero of this war,
The true Prometheus, staked to all our woes
In bringing the fire of God's love to man.
To give this flag or that some paltry acre,
Who'd spill the bright red cup of one man's blood?
But to maintain earth's light of God is worth
All that man's Lover lets us pay for it.

ITALY REVEALED

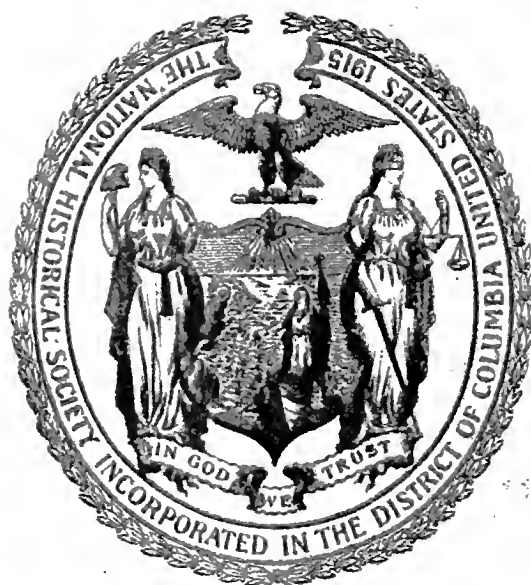
It well becomes us to exhort our hearts
To search the price of peace heaven weighs us at,
Since every mystery of life and death
This wild war dangles in its savage bud.
There 's not a people shares this planet's mercy
That has not sowed the seed war's red scythe reaps.
Should God mete Germany unmercied justice,
Which of us could that inquisition bear?
We have been saved, but in a great rebuke
Shaming all calls for penance that yield none.

Even as the tribes that punished Benjamin
Were sold in battle to his sword by God,
So Justice in this war brands the most guilty
In a hot chastisement that scores us all,
Warning our past, our present, and our future,
Of the curst pharisee in every heart,
Ready to act the Cain condemned in others;
And warning skepticism, that sold our day,
Like Judas, to this cross of war, God is,
And will, at any cost to Him and us,
Require our evil, and regard His throne.
Thank Him, He is, lest hell engulf the earth
Forever and forever. Hark, ye peoples,
And hear the rod! let sorrow teach our sin!

Let there be hope where God has written books,
Scriptures of sorrow, in the nations' hearts!
There, Italy, a gospel to the world,
Against the midnight black of war and death,
Engrossed by Him Who loosed thy seven clasps,
The apocalypse of thy existence stands,
Lettered without and in, an unsealed book.
Here, in thy palimpsest, lately recovered
Out of the catacombs of former things,
Papyrus of a nation old yet new,
Inscribed in characters Love's hand has traced
With glorious illumination-work,
We read thy sufferings, and read with hope.
Yet, bleared with blood-stain, be thy seven-leaved book
Only by reverent, trembling fingers took!

God crowns His warrior. Italy, we see
His diadem arraying thee:
Victorious Anguish! Agony glory-crowned!

Hail, Italy, blazoned in the badge of God,
The decoration of a million wounds!
Thy coronet of glittering scars
Is brighter than a wreath of stars;
Thy gold was beaten out of infinite woes;
Thy jewels all reflect







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